

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7357

INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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GENEVA FOR SCHAUFELE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH PRESS ON GENEVA TALKS, NOVEMBER 5

1. STORIES AND EDITORIALS TODAY NOTE THAT DESPITE A NEGATIVE ATMOSPHERE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IS STILL IN PROGRESS. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT CARTER'S ELECTION MAY MAKE THINGS MORE DIFFICULT FOR IAN SMITH. REPORTS ALSO REFLECT AN INCREASING NERVOUSNESS REGARDING THE BRITISH ROLE.

2. TIMES CORRESPONDENT ALAN MCGREGOR IN GENEVA: "IT SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE THAT AN ARGUMENT OVER A FEW MONTHS (ON A DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE) EITHER WAY COULD STYMIE NEGOTIATIONS TO WIND UP 86 YEARS OF WHITE RULE

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AND THE APPARENT FAILURE OF THE CHAIRMAN'S DATE-FIXING

INITIATIVE IS LIKELY TO MAKE THE OTHER ISSUES THAT MUCH TOUGHER." TIMES EDITORIAL: "THE GENEVA CONFERENCE HAS SURVIVED ITS FIRST WEEK. IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO HOPE IT WILL PRODUCE A RHODESIAN SETTLEMENT.... THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR A HURRIED ELECTION AND A TRUNCATED CAMPAIGN. EVERYONE KNOWS THE BLACK VOTERS WILL BE VOTING FOR BLACK RULE. BUT IN A LONG RUN UP, EXISTING FACTIONAL BITTERNESS WILL BE ENHANCED DANGEROUSLY.... MR. SMITH'S HAND WOULD SEEM TO BE WEAKENED BY MR. CARTER'S VICTORY."

3. GUARDIAN WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT HELLA PICK: "WITH THE DEPARTURE OF...SMITH FROM GENEVA ON THE DAY THE US ADMINISTRATION BECAME A VERY LAME DUCK INDEED, DR. KISSINGER HAS BECOME EVEN MORE WORRIED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS TO BLOCK A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA, ENCOURAGE THE GUERRILLA WAR AND EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, MUCH AS IT SEIZED OPPORTUNITIES IN ANGOLA." GUARDIAN CORRESPONDENT RICHARD NORTON-TAYLOR: "THE ONE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT MESSAGE ABOUT THE RHODESIA TALKS COMING OUT OF WHITEHALL IS THAT THE LESS BRITAIN GETS INVOLVED, THE BETTER. THE GOVERNMENT IS PLAYING DOWN ANY SIGNIFICANCE THERE MAY BE IN MR. SMITH'S...RETURN TO SALISBURY AND OFFICIALS INSIST THAT MR. CROSLAND, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, WOULD FLY TO GENEVA ONLY AS A LAST RESORT."

4. GUARDIAN EDITORIAL: "MR. SMITH, GOING HOME, SAYS THAT CARTER'S ELECTION MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. DEPRESSED FOREIGN OFFICE MEN, WISHING SMITH WOULD COME BACK, ARE EQUALLY FIRM THAT A NEW PRESIDENT WILL MAKE NO DIFFERENCE AT GENEVA: CARTER EXPRESSED TOTAL PRIVATE COMMITMENT TO PRESENT POLICIES BEFORE HIS ELECTION. NOW WE SHALL HAVE TO SEE--AND CARTER'S TRAILING OF AN 'AGGRESSIVE PEACE STRATEGY' FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA MEANS WE MAY SEE MORE THAN EITHER RHODESIA OR WHITEHALL EXPECT. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THEY ARE BOTH WRONG IN AT LEAST ONE MAJOR RESPECT. CARTER'S VICTORY DOES MAKE IT DIFFERENT, BECAUSE HENRY KISSINGER WILL GO. AND THAT, AT ONCE, RENDERS THE WHOLE LONG HAGGLE OVER WHAT KISSINGER PROMISED TO SMITH, NYERERE, KAUNDA AND CASTS OF THOU- UNCLASSIFIED

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SANDS ON HIS EPIC SHUTTLE REDUNDANT. GENEVA, AND ALL PARTICIPANTS, WILL HAVE TO MANAGE WITHOUT HENRY. WHAT THEY SAID TO HENRY AND WHAT HE PROMISED THEM IS NOW TOTALLY BESIDE THE POINT. THAT MAY NOT MEAN A FRESH START FOR THE TALKS; BUT IT DOES AT LEAST MEAN THE OLD, GRUBBY SLATE WIPE CLEAN."

5. FINANCIAL TIMES CORRESPONDENT BRIGET BLOOM: "FOR

MANY THE VERY FACT THAT SUCH A DISPARATE GROUP OF MEN
IS SITTING ROUND THE SAME TABLE DISCUSSING PRACTICALITIES
IS ITSELF REMARKABLE. AFTER ALL, THREE OF THE AFRICAN
LEADERS HAVE EACH SPENT 10 YEARS IN RHODESIAN JAILS AND
ALMOST AS MANY COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER FOR POLITICAL
LEADERSHIP.

WHETHER THIS LOW-KEY ATMOSPHERE CAN BE MAINTAINED--
ESPECIALLY IF THE PROVOCATIVE MR. VAN DER BYL OCCUPIES

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MR. SMITH'S CHAIR, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. MR. RICHARD
CERTAINLY SEEMS TO FEEL THAT THE ROUND TABLE FORMAT IS
LESS LIKELY TO PRODUCE HISTRIONICS THAN PLENARY MEETINGS,
THOUGH THESE COULD BE RESORTED TO IF DELEGATES FEEL
IN BISHOP MUZOREWA'S PICTURESQUE PHRASE THE NEED OF

'EMPTYING THEIR CHESTS' FROM TIME TO TIME.
BUT ANOTHER EXPLANATION FOR THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMENTS OF THE WHITE RHODESIANS, IN
PARTICULAR, MAY BE MORE FUNDAMENTAL. IT IS EASY TO SEE
HOW MR. SMITH AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE FELT ANGERED AT THE
LONG DELAYS BETWEEN MEETINGS WITH MR. SMITH INSISTING
THAT HE, IF NOT THE AFRICANS, HAVE WORK TO DO AT HOME
RATHER THAN SIT 'TWIDDLING MY THUMBS HERE.'
THE FEELING HAS GROWN HERE, THIS WEEK ANYWAY THAT
MR. SMITH IS IN FACT A CONCERNED MAN AND THAT HE KNOWS
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IT. HE MAY STILL, IN DESPERATION, TRY TO FIGHT HIS WAY
OUT BUT IT SEEMS AS LIKELY THAT HIS TOUGH PUBLIC WORDS
'ARE A MASK TO CONCEAL HIS FRUSTRATION AT THE SITUATION
IN WHICH HE FINDS HIMSELF.'" FINANCIAL TIMES EDITORIAL:
"IF, AT THE END OF A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION IN GENEVA,
THE WHITES AND THE BLACKS WERE TO AGREE THAT THEY WANTED
AN INDIVIDUAL BRITON TO ACT AS MODERATOR DURING THE
INTERIM PERIOD, THEN THIS IS SOMETHING WHICH
WELL CONSIDER. BUT IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD BRITAIN
ACCEPT GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TRANSITION
TO INDEPENDENCE."

6. DAILY TELEGRAPH EDITORIAL: "BRITAIN, IN THE PERSON
OF MR. RICHARD, HAS BEEN MAKING THE MISTAKE OF THINKING
THAT COSMETICS MAKE UP THE WHOLE OF THE PLAY. IF ONLY
THE AFRICAN DELEGATES CAN BE MADE TO FEEL SUFFICIENTLY
IMPORTANT, AND MR. SMITH AND HIS DELEGATION CAN BE
TREATED WITH SUFFICIENT CONTUMELY, EVERYTHING IS BOUND
TO COME OUT ALL RIGHT* MR. RICHARD HAS SPENT TOO LONG
IN THE LOBBIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK, WHERE
BUTTERING UP THE AFRO-ASIAN BLOC TO GAIN A VOTE HERE OR A
VOTE THERE HAS BEEN ELEVATED TO A FULL-TIME OCCUPATION.
AS MR. SMITH SAID ON GETTING BACK TO SALISBURY LAST
NIGHT, 'THERE IS A LOT OF ACTING GOING ON IN GENEVA AT
THE MOMENT.' MR. RICHARD SHOULD BE TOLD TO STOP THE
CHARADE AND GET DOWN TO WORK, OR COME HOME."

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